

THE HAUNT OF FEAR



NO. 5

REPRINT
EDITION

FEATURING...



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER

UGH! WHAT A... MESS!
BUT THEY'LL NEVER THINK OF
LOOKING FOR A FRESH CORPSE IN
THE COFFIN OF A MAN WHO
DIED IN 1867!



PINNY
CRAIG

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!



HEE, HEE! WELL, IT'S ME AGAIN! *THE OLD WITCH!* THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON IS LIT ONCE MORE! THE EVIL BREW IS BUBBLING AND STEAMING! I'M READY TO LADLE OUT ANOTHER OF MY HORROR YARNS! THIS IS A SPINE-TINGLER I CALL...

A BITING FINISH!

HE COULD HEAR THEM NOW! THE SHOUTING OF THE ENRAGED POSSE AS THEY CURSED THROUGH THE BRUSH... THE BAYING OF THE Slobbering BLOOD-HOUNDS, HIS SCENT STRONG IN THEIR NOSTRILS...



THE OLD HOUSE! IF I CAN GET... GASP... THERE BEFORE THEY CATCH ME... GASP... I CAN ESCAPE...

SUDDENLY THE HOUSE LOOMED UP AHEAD! ITS ROTTED SHUTTERS HUNG GRAZILY ON WINDOWS WHOSE PANES HAD LONG SINCE VANISHED! ITS SAGGING ROOF LEANED AWKWARDLY! THE CROOKED CHIMNEY WAS SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE GOLD MOON...



NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT THE TUNNEL! NO ONE BUT ME!

BRUNO BURST THROUGH THE DECAYED DOOR! THE CRASH OF THE WORM-EATEN WOOD ECHOED THROUGH THE EMPTY HOUSE...

THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER... BUT I'VE... I'VE BEATEN THEM!



HE MADE FOR THE FIREPLACE! IT WAS A HUGE STONE AFFAIR COVERING ALMOST ONE WALL OF THE ROOM...

THE SECRET ENTRANCE... THAT I DISCOVERED... AS A BOY...



THE STEPS WERE THERE, JUST AS HE HAD REMEMBERED THEM! HE STUMBLED DOWN... THE ROTTED WOOD GIVING WAY BENEATH HIS WEIGHT! HE PLUNGED INTO THE BLACKNESS...



HE LAY AT THE BOTTOM... IN THE DARKNESS... PANTING! HIS RIGHT LEG THROBBED WITH PAIN! IT WAS BROKEN! ABOVE... THE THUMPING OF BOOTED FEET TOLD HIM THEY WERE IN THE HOUSE...

THEY'LL NEVER FIND THE ENTRANCE TO THIS TUNNEL! IT'S MY SECRET, ALL MINE! OOH! MY LEG...



UPSTAIRS, HE COULD HEAR THE MUFFLED VOICES... THE CONFUSION... THE YELPING OF THE HOUNDS... AS THEY SEARCHED THE HOUSE! BEFORE HIM, THE TUNNEL STRETCHED OUT INTO THE BLOOM...

GOT TO GET MOVIN'! GOT TO GET TO THE OTHER END... TO THE RIVER! WHAT'S THIS? A SHOVEL! GOOD! I'LL TAKE IT WITH ME... IN CASE...



THE TUNNEL BRUNO WAS IN WAS OLD! IT HAD BEEN USED AS AN ESCAPE FROM THE HOUSE DURING THE CIVIL WAR... PART OF THE WELL KNOWN "UNDERGROUND RAILWAY"! HE DRAGGED HIMSELF FORWARD...

I WONDER... HOW MANY OTHERS LIKE ME... USED THIS TUNNEL TO ESCAPE FROM THE AUTHORITIES...



AS BRUNO CREEPT THROUGH THE BLACK, THOUGHTS FLASHED THROUGH HIS BRAIN! THOUGHTS OF WHY HE WAS THERE! OF HOW IT HAD ALL STARTED! HE REMEMBERED IT ALL SO WELL! FIVE MONTHS AGO... THAT NIGHT AT ELLEN'S HOUSE...

BUT, ELLEN! YOU MUST DECIDE BETWEEN US! WE BOTH WANT TO MARRY YOU! YOU'VE GOT TO PICK ONE...

I'M SORRY, BOB! YOU'RE BOTH SWEET... YOU AND BRUNO! I... I CAN'T DECIDE!



YES! BRUNO REMEMBERED! THERE IN THE DARKNESS OF THE TUNNEL HE REMEMBERED HIS DECISION! HE HAD DECIDED TO MAKE UP ELLEN'S MIND! SETTLE IT... ONCE AND FOR ALL...

HE'S COMING... NOW! HE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT HIM...



AS BOB HAD PASSED THE SPOT WHERE HE HAD HID, BRUNO HAD HURLED HIMSELF UPON HIM...



AGAIN AND AGAIN THE LEAD PIPE HAD COME DOWN...



...UNTIL BOB HAD MOVED NO MORE. NOW TO DISPOSE OF THE BODY! SOME PLACE WHERE THEY'LL NEVER FIND IT!



BRUNO HAD LIFTED HIS DEAD RIVAL ONTO HIS SHOULDERS! A PLAN HAD FORMED IN HIS MIND! HE CARRIED THE BODY TO THE CIVIL WAR BURIAL GROUNDS...

NO ONE GETS BURIED HERE ANY MORE! THEY USE THE NEW CEMETERY NEARER TO TOWN...



HE HAD LEFT THE BODY AND SEARCHED A NEIGHBORING FARM! AFTER HAVING FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR, HE HAD RETURNED WITH THE SHOVEL! THEN HE BEGAN TO DIG...

THE GRAVE MARKER SAYS 'THADDIUS GODKIN... DIED 1867!' THERE SHOULDN'T BE MUCH LEFT OF HIM...



SOON A HOLLOW THUD TOLD BRUNO HE HAD STRUCK OLD THADDIUS GODKIN'S COFFIN! HE LIFTED THE ROTTED LID...

NOTHING BUT BONES AND SHREDS OF CLOTHING! THIS WILL DO FINE...



BRUNO SLID HIS FRESHLY KILLED VICTIM INTO THE AGED CASKET...

YOU AND THADDIUS OUGHT TO BE NICE AND COMFY TOGETHER, BOB!



OF COURSE THEY NEVER FOUND HIM! BRUNO LAUGHED TO HIMSELF AS HE MOVED THROUGH THE TUNNEL...

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT TO LOOK IN THE GRAVE OF A MAN BURIED IN 1867?



THEN BRUNO THOUGHT OF ELLEN OF WHAT HE TOLD HER AFTER BOB "DISAPPEARED"...

HE'S PROBABLY RUN OFF, ELLEN! MAYBE TO THE BIG CITY! THIS OUGHT TO SHOW YOU WHO LOVES YOU *MOST*!

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, BRUNO!



THE TUNNEL TURNED SHARPLY! BRUNO'S LEG PAINED HIM AS HE HALF-CRAWLED, HALF-SLID AROUND THE CORNER...

ALMOST TO THE END NOW! I REMEMBER... WHEN I WAS A BOY! THIS PART PASSES BENEATH THE OLD BURYIN' GROUNDS!



...AND ELLEN! HE HAD MARRIED HER SOON AFTER! HE HAD BEEN HAPPY... SO HAPPY... UNTIL... THAT MORNING...

ELLEN! WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?

YOU... YOU TALKED IN YOUR SLEEP!



FEAR HAD STOLEN INTO BRUNO'S HEART! IT HAD CRAWLED UP HIS SPINE LIKE A SLIVER OF ICE... HAD POUNDED IN HIS BRAIN...

WHAT DID I SAY, ELLEN?

YOU MURDERED HIM, DIDN'T YOU? YOU MURDERED BOB!



HE REMEMBER IT SO WELL! AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY! BUT... BRUNO CHUGKLED... IT WAS YESTERDAY! BRUNO'S BRAIN... HIS THOUGHTS REELED! HE REMEMBERED HOW HE HAD REACHED FOR HER! HOW WHITE HER FACE HAD BEEN... AND HER THROAT... HER THROAT...

YES, ELLEN! I KILLED HIM! BUT... YOU'LL NEVER TELL ANYONE! NEVER...



YES, HER THROAT! HER SOFT WHITE THROAT! NOW EASILY HE HAD SLIPPED HIS FINGERS ABOUT IT! HOW SIMPLE IT HAD BEEN TO CLOSE THEM...TIGHTER...TIGHTER...UNTIL...

SHE... SHE'S DEAD!



AND MRS. LANE! PRYING, SPYING MRS. LANE! SHE HAD BEEN WATCHING FROM HER WINDOW! SHE GOREAMED! HE COULDN'T STAND SCREAMING! BRUNO RUSHED FROM HIS HOUSE...SNATCHING THE BREAD KNIFE FROM THE TABLE...

YOU MUSTN'T TELL EITHER, MRS. LANE! YOU'LL HAVE TO DIE, TOO!



YES! IT HAD BEEN YESTERDAY! HE WAS SURE OF IT NOW! MR. LANE HAD SEEN HIM...STANDING OVER MRS. LANE...AND THE KNIFE...WET...STICKY...RED...

HE KILLED HER! GOOD LORD, YOU'VE GOT TO STOP HIM! HE'S MAD! MAD!



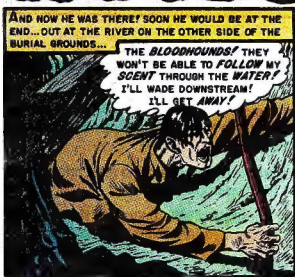
THEN...THE POSSE! THEY CHASED HIM! HE HAD HIDDEN IN THE WOODS...BUT THE BLOODHOUNDS FOUND HIS SCENT! AND THEN HE HAD THOUGHT OF IT! THE HOUSE...THE DESERTED OLD HOUSE WITH THE TUNNEL HE HAD FOUND...AS A BOY...

IF...I CAN GET THERE BEFORE THEY CATCH ME...I CAN ESCAPE...THROUGH THE TUNNEL...



AND NOW HE WAS THERE! SOON HE WOULD BE AT THE END...OUT AT THE RIVER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BURIAL GROUNDS...

THE BLOODHOUNDS! THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO FOLLOW MY SCENT THROUGH THE WATER! I'LL WADE DOWNSTREAM! I'LL GET AWAY!



SUDDENLY, BRUNO CAME TO A STOP! THE TUNNEL! THE TUNNEL ENDED...

MUST HAVE GAYED IN! THE HEAVY RAINS...THE RIVER OVERFLOWED TWO YEARS AGO...



GOT TO DIG MYSELF THROUGH
THE REST OF THE WAY! LUCKY
I BROUGHT THE SHOVEL...



BRUNO WENT TO THE TASK OF CLEAR-
ING HIS WAY THROUGH THE GAVED-IN
PART OF THE TUNNEL! HE LAUGHED
TO HIMSELF...

I'LL GET THE POSSE'S
LOOKIN' FOR ME BACK AT
THE HOUSE...



THE SPADE SANK INTO THE SOFT
EARTH AHEAD! THERE WASN'T
MUCH ROOM TO MOVE AROUND...

I'LL HAVE TO SWITCH THE
DIRT FROM UP AHEAD...TO
BEHIND ME...



THEN THE SHOVEL STRUCK IT! IT SPLINTERED UNDER
THE BLOW! BRUNO LIT A MATCH AND PEERED AT WHAT
HE HAD FOUND...

WOOD... BRASS HANDLES... STUDS?
IT... IT'S A COFFIN!



AT FIRST HE WAS SHOOKED... BUT THEN HE REMEM-
BERED! THIS PART OF THE TUNNEL *DID* PASS UNDER
THE BURYING GROUNDS...

GOT TO GET IT OUT OF
THE WAY... GOT TO GET
BY IT...



THE ROTTED AND DECAYED WOOD GAVE WAY AS BRUNO
PUSHED! HIS ARM SHOT FORWARD INTO THE HOLE...

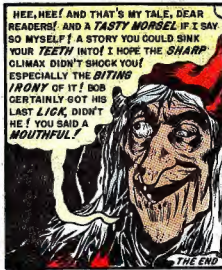
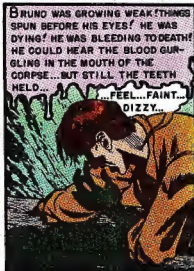
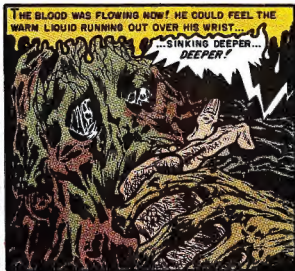
WHAT THE...? FEELS LIKE... LIKE...
A HEAD!



THE STENCH REACHED HIS NOSTRILS! FUNNY! SUCH
AN OLD COFFIN WITH A BODY NOT YET FULLY DE-
COMPOSED? HIS HAND TRAVELED OVER THE FEAT-
URES! THEY WERE PULPY AND SOFT! THEN THE
TEETH CLOSED DOWN...

IT... IT'S GOT MY
HAND! IT'S BITING
ME!





THE CRYPT OF TERROR

WELCOME, MY VERY DEAR *FIENDS*! WELCOME! ONCE AGAIN TO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*! I AM THE *CRYPT-KEEPER*! I SEE IT IS TIME ONCE MORE FOR ANOTHER BLOOD-CURDLING, SPINE-TINGLING YARN FROM MY VAST COLLECTION OF HORROR STORIES WHICH I KEEP HERE IN THE *CRYPT*! THIS TALE CONCERNS A CARNIVAL... THE KIND THAT TRAVELS FROM TOWN TO TOWN! THE MANAGER OF THIS CARNIVAL WAS HENRY HASTINGS! LISTEN NOW AS THE STORY UNFOLDS IN HENRY'S OWN WORDS! HE CALLS IT...

HORROR in the FREAK TENT!



MY NAME IS HENRY HASTINGS! I MANAGED ONE OF THOSE TWO-BIT CARNIVALS THAT HITS YOUR TOWN EVERY NOW AND THEN! YOU KNOW THE KIND! AMUSEMENT RIDES... ACROBATS... CHISELING GAMES! THIS PARTICULAR CARNIVAL HAD A SPECIAL ATTRACTION... A FREAK SHOW...

STEP RIGHT UP, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! SEE FANNY, THE FOUR-HUNDRED POUND FAT LADY...



THE OWNER OF THE FREAK CON-
CESSION WAS A FAT-FACED CHAR-
ACTER NAMED LOOEY GLANTZ! OUT
FRONT... HE WAS A GREAT SHOWMAN...

...BUT BACKSTAGE, HE WAS A
RAT! HIS FREAKS DESPISED HIM!
HE TREATED THEM LIKE DIRT!
THERE WAS **FANNY**, THE FAT LADY...

...AND **XETAL**, THE INDIAN RUBBER
MAN... WHAT'S THE MATTER,
XETAL? DON'T YOU LIKE
YOUR JOB? I WATCHED
YOUR ACT! STRETCH IT...
STRETCH IT **MORE...**



...AND THE POOR PATHETIC CASE THEY CALLED
CORPUS, THE ARMLESS AND LEGLESS BOY! HE
HAD BEEN BORN WITHOUT LIMBS AND WAS QUITE
HELPLESS! GLANTZ WAS PARTICULARLY MEAN
TO CORPUS...

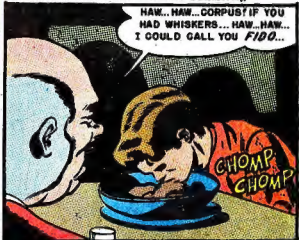
BUT, MR. GLANTZ! HE...

FANNY! DON'T FEED HIM!
LET HIM EAT HIMSELF! PUT
THE PLATE DOWN IN FRONT
OF HIM...



CORPUS WAS FORCED TO EAT LIKE A DOG... AND
GLANTZ ROARED WITH SADISTIC DELIGHT...

HAW... HAW... CORPUS! IF YOU
HAD WHISKERS... HAW... HAW...
I COULD CALL YOU **FIDO**...



GLANTZ NEVER LOST A SINGLE OPPORTUNITY TO INFLICT
SEVERE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL TORTURE UPON HIS
POOR FREAKS! HIS PERVERSED SENSE OF HUMOR
KEPT HIM WELL SUPPLIED WITH INGENUOUS METHODS...

ZOLTO! I WANT TO TALK
TO YOU!

WHAT IS IT
MR. GLANTZ?



ZOLTO WAS THE SHARP-EYED KNIFE THROWER!
HIS ACT CONSISTED OF THROWING KNIVES, ICE-
PICKS, CLEAVERS AND THE LIKE AT HIS WIFE
WHO STOOD SPREAD-EAGLED ABOUT TWENTY
FEET AWAY...

I JUST
THOUGHT YOU OUGHT TO
KNOW! YOUR WIFE'S BEEN
TWO-TIMING YOU! SHE'S
RUNNIN' AROUND WITH
A CONCESSION OWNER...

YOU'RE LYING!
IT ISN'T TRUE!



OF COURSE GLANTZ LIED! BUT HE HAD SUCCESSFULLY INSTILLED THAT SPARK OF JEALOUSY IN ZOLTO'S MIND THAT CAUSED THE HAND TO TREMBLE... EVER SO SLIGHTLY...

IF THE KNIVES COME CLOSE, MRS. ZOLTO, REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU! YOUR HUSBAND WOULD LIKE YOU OUT OF THE WAY, THERE'S A LITTLE DANCING GIRL DOWN THE MIDWAY...

YOU... YOU'RE JOKING... AREN'T YOU...

THUNK

I'M TELLING YOU THIS, ALL OF THIS, BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO KNOW EXACTLY THE TYPE OF MAN LOOEY GLANTZ WAS! THE LITTLE JOKE HE HAD PLAYED ON THE ZOLTOS HAD HAD ITS EFFECT...

SHE'S GONE! LEFT ME! JUST BECAUSE I SLIPPED AND HICKED HER ARM LAST NIGHT...

HAW... HAW! SHE FIGURED YOUR KNIVES WERE GETTING TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT, EH, ZOLTO?

IT'S YOUR FAULT, GLANTZ! YOU DID IT! YOU BROKE ME UP WITH THOSE LIES ABOUT HER...

WATCH YOURSELF, ZOLTO, OR YOU'LL BE LOOKING FOR A NEW GARNY! REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT A YOUNG MAN...

...SOB...
...SOB...

DON'T WORRY ZOLTO! I KNOW WHERE YOU CAN FIND A NEW PARTNER FOR YOUR ACT! THERE'S A LITTLE DANCING GIRL... DOWN THE MIDWAY...

A FEW NIGHTS LATER, MRS. ZOLTO RETURNED TO THE GARNY... MAYBE TO MAKE UP! I DON'T KNOW! I SAW HER IN THE CROWD AND WAS AT HER SIDE WHEN ZOLTO WENT INTO HIS KNIFE-THROWING ACT...

THE... THE DANGER... FROM DOWN THE MIDWAY! IT'S TRUE... SOB... TRUE...

SHE LEFT THE GROUNDS CRYING! THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO! GLANTZ'S LITTLE JOKE HAD BEEN CARRIED TO ITS EXTREME! SHE NEVER CAME BACK! EVEN I BEGAN TO DISLIKE THE EVIL FREAK-SHOW OWNER! ONE EVENING...

IT WAS GOOD OF YOU TO INVITE ME TO YOUR CHOW TABLE, ZOLTO!

IT WAS GOOD OF YOU TO COME, MR. HASTINGS! FANNY!

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO FEED CORPUS! LET HIM FEED HIMSELF!

YES, MR. GLANTZ! I... I'M SORRY, CORPUS!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, FANNY!

I WAS HORRIFIED TO SEE SUCH HUMILI-
MUNITY! BUT...WHEN GLANTZ GOT UP
AND...

FEED YOURSELF,
CORPUS! LIKE...
THIS...

GLUG-ON-H!

IT WAS DISGUSTING! GLANTZ
HAD PUSHED THAT POOR HELPLESS
BOY'S FACE INTO HIS PLATE! I
STARTED TO OBJECT BUT ZOLTO
ACTED SOONER...

LEAVE HIM ALONE,
GLANTZ!

PUT DOWN
THAT KNIFE,
ZOLTO!



DON'T YOU EVER TORTURE THAT
BOY AGAIN, GLANTZ, OR I WILL
PUT DOWN THIS KNIFE---RIGHT
THROUGH YOUR UGLY SKULL...



I WAS DUMBSTRUCK WITH HORROR...POWERLESS TO
MOVE AS I WATCHED THE ENSUING SCENE! GLANTZ WAS
INFURIATED! HE HAD BEEN MADE A FOOL OF IN
FRONT OF THE TROUPE! HE RUSHED TO A CORNER OF
THE TENT...

THREATEN ME WITH A KNIFE...
WILL YOU?



IT WAS ALL OVER BEFORE I COULD DO ANYTHING!
GLANTZ SCOOPED UP TWO IRONS THAT THE FIRE-EATER
HAD BEEN HEATING FOR THE EVENING PERFORMANCE!
THEY WERE WHITE HOT! HE RUSHED AT THE PARALYZED
ZOLTO...

I'LL TEACH YOU!



WE SAT THERE...THE FREAKS AND I... AS GLANTZ
HAMMED THE WHITE-HOT IRONS INTO ZOLTO'S EYES!
HIS SHRIEK OF AGONIZING PAIN ECHOED UP AND DOWN THE
DESERTED MIDWAY...

YOU FOOL!
YOU'VE BLINDED
HIM!

HE... HE HAD
IT COMING!



ZOLTO LAY ON THE GROUND...HIS FACE CUPPED IN
HIS ARMS! HE WAS SCREAMING IN AGONY! THE SMELL
OF BURNED FLESH WAS ABOUT US! I FELT A WAVE OF
NAUSEA COME OVER ME! AS I LEFT THE TENT FOR A
BREATH OF FRESH AIR, I HEARD GLANTZ'S HYSTERI-
CAL VOICE...

GET OUT! GET! YOU'RE
THROUGH! YOU CAN'T DO YOUR
ACT NOW... **BLIND!** GET OUT
AND DON'T COME BACK!



I THOUGHT OF CALLING THE POLICE, BUT I KNEW THAT IT WOULD DO NO GOOD! GLANTZ HAD ACTED IN SELF-DEFENSE! AND HE HAD THE FREAKS SO TERRORIZED, THEY WOULD BE AFRAID TO TESTIFY TO THE CONTRARY! A FEW WEEKS LATER...



YES, ZOLTO! IT IS I! WHY ARE YOU HIDING?

IT'S FANNY AND GORPUS AND XETAL AND THE REST! THEY'RE TAKING CARE OF ME TILL MY EYES HEAL...



THAT'S GOOD OF THEM ZOLTO!

YES! THEY BRING ME FOOD... AND THEY HIDE ME FROM MR. GLANTZ!



BUT... YOU CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS FOREVER, ZOLTO!

OH, NO! WE'RE WORKING ON THAT...



WORKING ON WHAT?

AN ACT! THEY'RE TEACHING ME! IT'S EASY... EASIER THAN I THOUGHT!



TEACHING YOU AN ACT?

YES! THROWING KNIVES AGAIN! IT'S EASY! THEY JUST FACE ME TOWARD THE BOARD... AND I TRY TO VISUALIZE MY PARTNER...



PARTNER?

OH, OF COURSE WE'RE ONLY USING A DUMMY! WHEN I GET REALLY GOOD, THEN... MAYBE...



ZOLTO WAS LIKE A LITTLE BOY AGAIN! HE BUBBLED AND CHATTERED ABOUT HIS NEW ACT AND HOW GOOD IT WOULD BE! I FELT SO SORRY FOR HIM...

SO YOU WON'T TELL MR. GLANTZ ABOUT IT, WILL YOU, MR. HASTINGS? AT LEAST NOT UNTIL I'M READY!

READY FOR WHAT?

READY TO SHOW IT TO HIM, OF COURSE! THEN... MAYBE HE'LL FORGIVE ME... AND TAKE ME BACK!

YES, ZOLTO! MAYBE HE... WILL... FORGIVE YOU!

I FELT AS IF I WANTED TO CRY! THE FREAKS HAD DONE WONDERS WITH ZOLTO! HE BORE NO MALICE! AND HE HAD SUCH CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF...

I... I WONDER IF IT COULD BE POSSIBLE... IF HE REALLY COULD GO ON AGAIN... **THROWING KNIVES. BLIND!**

AND THEN... ONE NIGHT ABOUT A MONTH LATER... ZOLTO STUMBLED INTO MY OFFICE...

TONIGHT, MR. HASTINGS! I'M GOING TO PERFORM TONIGHT! FANNY TOLD ME MR. GLANTZ WOULD SEE MY ACT TONIGHT!

I'LL BE THERE, ZOLTO! I WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR ANYTHING!

AND I MEANT IT! THAT NIGHT I MADE MY WAY TO THE FREAK TENT! I GUESS THE AUDITION HAD ALREADY STARTED, FOR I HEARD LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE AS I ENTERED...

BRAVO, ZOLTO!

GOOD SHOT!

A LITTLE HIGHER THIS TIME...

I WATCHED FASCINATED! I HAD COME IN BEHIND THE BACKBOARD SO THAT I COULD SEE THEIR FACES! THEY WERE SMILING! IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE I HAD SEEN ANY OF THEM SMILE...

NOW, AN ICE-PICK, ZOLTO! TO THE LEFT THIS TIME... JUST ABOUT AN INCH...

ZOLTO THREW THE ICE PICK! IT MADE A DULL SOUND AS IT HIT! ZOLTO WAS SMILING TOO, ALTHOUGH IT WAS A BLANK SMILE! A FACE WITHOUT EYES LACKS SO MUCH EXPRESSION...

GOOD, ZOLTO! HAH, HAH! GOOD!

ANOTHER ZOLTO! ANOTHER... THIS TIME HIGHER...

...AND TO THE RIGHT...

THE SECOND ICE-PICK WAS THROWN! IT, TOO, HIT TRUE! THEY ROARED WITH DELIGHT! I APPLAUDED TOO, ALTHOUGH I COULD NOT SEE FROM MY VANTAGE POINT HOW CLOSE IT CAME...

SOMEONE'S THERE! BEHIND THE BOARD!

IS THAT YOU, MR. HASTINGS?

YES, ZOLTO! IT IS I!



I'M SHOWING MR. GLANTZ MY ACT! CAN YOU SEE WELL?

WELL ENOUGH, ZOLTO! GO AHEAD!



I DID NOT WANT TO MOVE! I HAD NOT SEEN SUCH HAPPINESS AMONG THE FREAKS FOR SO LONG THAT I WANTED TO STAY WHERE I COULD SEE THEIR FACES... NOT THE BOARD...

NOW A CLEAVER, ZOLTO... A CLEAVER...

DOWN A LITTLE THIS TIME...

AND OVER TO THE RIGHT AN INCH...



I LOOKED FOR GLANTZ! I WANTED TO SEE HIS EXPRESSION! I KNEW HE WOULD GO FOR THIS ACT! BUT... HE WAS NOT DOWN IN THE SEATS...

WHERE'S LOOZEY, ZOLTO!

HE'S WATCHING... ISN'T HE?

SURE... ZOLTO... SURE HE IS...



THE CLEAVER LANDED WITH A DULL THUD! I LOOKED DOWN! THERE WAS A POOL OF BLOOD AT THE BASE OF THE BACK-BOARD! A COLD SHIVER WENT DOWN MY SPINE...



GLANTZ WAS GAGGED, AND TIED TO THE BOARD! AND ZOLTO'S AIM HAD BEEN HORRIBLY BAD... OR GOOD AS THE CASE MAY BE! HE HAD RARELY MISSED! THE FREAKS HAD GUIDED HIM WELL! I BREATHED A PRAYER AS I LEFT...

YES! HE'S WATCHING, ZOLTO! ANOTHER CLEAVER AND YOUR ACT WILL BE OVER...

LORD HAVE MERCY ON ON THEM...



HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S HENRY HASTINGS' STORY! STRIKING TALE, ENTICING FINISH! WELL, OLD LOOZEY CERTAINLY HAD IT COMING... AND IT CAME! ICE-PICKS... KNIVES... CLEAVERS! OH, THAT LAST CLEAVER WAS THE TOPPER. HEH, HEH... GET IT? AFTER THAT, GLANTZ LOST HIS HEAD! WELL, SEE YOU IN MY OWN MAGAZINE, TALES FROM THE CRYPT! UNTIL THEN... DON'T LISTEN TO OLD KNIFE'S TALK!





SKELETON

It was obvious that he was a goner and would be dead within five minutes. His coat and shirt were slashed brutally and blood came pouring out of him in torrents. His eyes were wide and glassy, his mouth moved instinctively but the only sounds which came to his greyish lips were gurgled and incoherent. And then suddenly his body stopped quivering for a moment and he looked up with a glint of recognition at the Police officers surrounding him.

"Out at Fairview..." he whispered, and the Police Stenographer pressed closer, notebook ready. "F-Fairview... the cemetery," continued the man with the knife slashes draining his lifeblood away. "The headstone... it's marked... P-Paul Kleeg..."

The Homicide Captain leaned over the dying man. "Who are you... how did you get to Police Headquarters? Who stabbed you... where are they?"

The man's mouth moved convulsively and his words were barely audible. "M-My name... Weldon. T-Two days ago... got out of State Prison. Came here to see Kleeg's grave... open it... make sure he was dead like papers said. Kleeg was in on bank job with me ten years ago... I was grabbed... he got away. Then I heard he died... eight years ago... came to make sure!"

A bubble of blood burst on the man's lips and a shudder passed down his body, but after a moment he continued: "Opened his grave... c-case all rotten and full of weeds..."

only a skeleton left there... grinning as if Kleeg was laughing at me! I bent over skeleton... to see if he was buried with ring or any other jewelry I could use... when his hand reached out and grabbed me! I-I couldn't move... then he stabbed me with some kind of blade he had... some kind of knife..."

The man's head fell back and a last tortured gasp escaped him. He was dead. The Captain gave his orders in a hushed voice: "Have the Morgue pick 'im up right away! Name's Weldon, eh? Must be the one listed among this month's releases from up-river. Come on... we'll saunter over to Kleeg's grave out at Fairview! Craziest story I ever heard... imagine, a skeleton stabbing a man to death!"

The circle of Police stared into the opened grave. The Captain spoke first, as he moved down to it, past the cemetery workmen who had shovelled away the dirt that covered it. "A skeleton... just like Weldon described it. And it looks as if it has been dug up very recently..."

"Craziest story any of us ever heard!" a Sergeant said aloud. "What probably happened is that Weldon went off his rocker and stabbed himself! Who ever heard of a skeleton...?"

At that moment the Captain looked up from the decayed coffin, his face chalk-white. "His story is crazy," he said, "and only an insane man would believe it! But just look at THIS!"

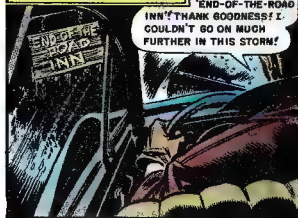
The officers craned forward. There, grasped in the fleshless hand of Paul Kleeg's skeleton, was a blade several inches long. Rusted so completely that it had almost merged with the long tapering bones which clutched it! And covering the entire length of that corroded blade was a sticky dark brown substance. Blood, just beginning to dry!

THIS TALE IS ACTUALLY ABOUT
TO HAPPEN TO YOU! I CALL IT...
A TASTY MORSEL!



YOU PEER THROUGH THE BLINDING DOWNPOUR AT THE SIGN! THE HEADLIGHTS OF YOUR CAR REFLECT ON THE WATER-SOAKED WOOD! YOU CAN BARELY MAKE OUT THE FADED LETTERS! THEY READ...

'END-OF-THE-ROAD
INN'! THANK GOODNESS! I
COULDN'T GO ON MUCH
FURTHER IN THIS STORM!



YOU TURN INTO THE TREE-LINED ROAD! UP
AHEAD, YOU CAN SEE THE LIGHTS OF THE INN
SHINING THROUGH THE HEAVY RAIN! YOU PULL
UP TO THE DOOR...

I HOPE THERE'S A ROOM
AVAILABLE!



IN ANSWER TO YOUR FEVERISH KNOCKING, THE DOOR IS OPENED BY A LARGE UGLY-FEATURED MAN...

YES?

I... I WAS CAUGHT IN THE STORM! I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD FIND LODGING HERE... FOR TONIGHT!

HIS BREADY EYES FOLLOW YOU AS HE STEPS ASIDE AND YOU ENTER THE GLOOMY INTERIOR...

IS THERE A ROOM FOR ME?

I THINK I HAVE ONE VACANT?

YOU STUDY YOUR HOST? HE IS TALL, ALMOST OVERSIZED? HE STEPS BEHIND THE DESK AND PUSHES A BATTERED BOOK... ITS PAGES YELLOWED WITH AGE... FORWARD...

IF YOU'LL SIGN THE REGISTER...

OF COURSE!

THEN THE INNKEEPER TAKES A KEY AND LEADS YOU UPSTAIRS TO YOUR ROOM! AS HE OPENS THE DOOR, THE MUSTY ODOR OF FOUL AIR BEARS YOUR NOSTRILS...

IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, JUST LET ME KNOW!

THANK YOU! I WILL!

HE LEAVES! YOU LISTEN AS HIS HEAVY FOOTSTEPS DESCEND DARK STAIRS AND FADE OUT OF EARSHOT! YOU LOOK ABOUT YOU! THE ROOM IS SPARSELY FURNISHED! A THICK LAYER OF DUST COVERS EVERYTHING!

WELL! I GUESS I'LL TURN IN! DRIVING THROUGH THE RAIN HAS TIRED ME!

THE ROOM IS GOLD AND DARK! YOU SEARCH THE CLOSET FOR A BLANKET! THERE IS NONE! THE SINGLE THIN BED SPREAD WILL NOT BE ENOUGH! YOU LOOK FOR THE HOUSE PHONE...

BLAST IT! GUESS I'LL HAVE TO GO DOWNSTAIRS AND ASK HIM FOR A BLANKET!

YOU OPEN THE DOOR OF YOUR ROOM AND LOOK OUT! THE HALL IS DARK AND DESERTED! YOU GO DOWNSTAIRS! THE LIGHT FROM THE FIREPLACE CASTS DANCING SHADOWS THROUGH THE LOBBY! THERE IS AN EERIE STRANGENESS ABOUT IT! AND THE INNKEEPER IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN...

H-M-M-M! GUESS I'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL HE COMES BACK FROM WHEREVER HE IS! THIS CHAIR LOOKS INVITING...

YOU SIT DOWN! THE WARMTH OF THE CRACKLING FIRE FEELS GOOD! YOU GAZE AT THE LICKING FLAMES...

WONDER WHERE HE CAN BE...



THE FIRE LEAPS UPWARD! THE BURNING LOGS SPATTER AND SNAP! YOU SIGH! YES! THE DRIVE THROUGH THE RAIN HAS EXHAUSTED YOU...

I'D JUST AS SOON SPEND THE NIGHT DOWN HERE BEFORE THIS FIRE! IT'S SO... *WARM!*



SUDDENLY THE *BLOOD FREEZES* IN YOUR *VEINS!* FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS COMES...

A *NOAN!*

GOD... WHAT A *HORRIBLE* SOUND!



YOU JUMP TO YOUR FEET! YOU STRAIN YOUR EARS... LISTENING! THEN YOU HEAR IT AGAIN! AN *AGO-NIZING NOAN!* IT MAKES THE HAIR ON YOUR NECK *CRAWL!*...

IT'S COMING FROM BEHIND THAT DOOR!



YOU STEAL TOWARD THE DOOR! YOU REACH OUT CAUTIOUSLY AND TWIST THE KNOB! IT SWINGS OPEN! STEPS LEAD DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS! FROM DOWN THERE... IN THE BLACKNESS... YOU HEAR IT AGAIN... BUT WEAKER...

I'VE GOT TO SEE WHAT IT IS! PERHAPS THE INNKEEPER...



YOU MOVE SLOWLY DOWN RICKETY STEPS! ALL IS SILENT NOW! YOU LISTEN! THEN *ANOTHER* SOUND REACHES YOUR EARS! A STEADY *Drip Drip*...

LIKE DROPS OF WATER... FALLING INTO A BUCKET...



YOU CURSE YOURSELF FOR NOT BRINGING A FLASHLIGHT! THE *DRIP... DRIP... DRIPPING* IS CLOSER NOW! YOU'RE ALMOST UPON IT! THEN YOU HEAR THE *WHIMPERING*... THE WEAK SAD WHIMPERING! YOU SEARCH YOUR POCKETS FOR A MATCH! YOU FIND ONE! YOU STRIKE IT! THE CELLAR FILLS WITH LIGHT!...

OH, LORD!

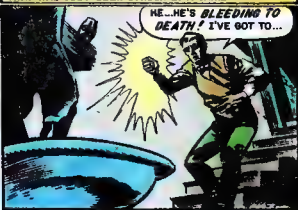


IT IS A MAN! A STRANGER... NOT THE INNKEEPER! HE LIES ON A TABLE...TIED THERE BY ROPES! HIS EYES ARE WIDE IN HORROR AS HE STARES AT THE BURNING MATCH! THEN YOU LOOK DOWN...

A PAN! A PAN HALF-FILLED WITH...BLOOD!



YOUR STOMACH HEAVES! YOU WRETCH WITH NAUSEA! THE MAN'S ARM HANGS LIMPLY...THE WRIST BLASHED! THE BLOOD TRICKLES DOWN HIS FINGERTIPS AND DRIPS INTO THE PAN! HE WHIMPERS...LIKE A DOG THAT HAS JUST BEEN STRUCK BY A CAR...



HE...HE'S BLEEDING TO DEATH! I'VE GOT TO...

THE MATCH BURNS YOU AND YOU DROP IT IN PAIN! THE DARKNESS CLOSES IN! THE STEADY DRIPPING CONTINUES! SUDDENLY...

THE CELLAR DOOR! SOMEONE'S COMING!



YOU HIDE! YOU COWER BEHIND A PILE OF BOXES! A MAN THUMPS DOWN THE STEPS! HE CARRIES A LANTERN! HIS EYES GLEAM IN THE FLICKERING YELLOW LIGHT...



THE INNKEEPER!

YOU WATCH, TOO FRIGHTENED TO MOVE! HE APPROACHES THE MAN TIED TO THE TABLE! THE WHIMPERING HAS CEASED NOW! EVEN THE DRIPPING HAS SLOWED CONSIDERABLY! A GREEPING HORROR TELLS YOU...



HE... HE'S DEAD!

THE INNKEEPER NOODS HIS HEAD AS IF IN SILENT AGREEMENT! HE UNTIES THE LIMP BODY AND SLINGS IT OVER HIS SHOULDERS! HE CARRIES IT THROUGH A DOORWAY...



I...I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE! THE INNKEEPER... HE...HE'S A MANIAC!

YOU START TOWARD THE STAIRS! YOU AVOID LOOKING AT THE PAN ON THE FLOOR! THEN, YOU STOP...STARTLED! A MOTOR HAS STARTED! IT THROBS...MATCHING THE RACING BEAT OF YOUR OWN HEART! YOUR EYES FOLLOW THE SOUND...



IT...IT LOOKS LIKE A FROZEN-FOOD-LOCKER!

A MORBID CURIOSITY DRIVES YOU FORWARD! YOU HESITATE BEFORE IT... BUT THEN YOU LIFT THE LID...

NO! NO! LORD... LORD, NO!



INSIDE THE REFRIGERATED LOOKER IS A BARREL... A BARREL OF REDDISH-BROWN LIQUID! A BARREL OF BLOOD! YOU SLAM THE LID SHUT AND TURN... LEANING ON THE LOOKER FOR BALANCE...

HE... HE'S A VAMPIRE! HE COLLECTS THE BLOOD OF HIS VICTIMS!



YOU START TOWARD THE STAIRWAY... BUT THEN YOU HEAR THE INNKEEPER RETURNING! YOU JUST HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO HIDE! HE ENTERS THE ROOM... HIS EYES GLEAMING... HIS LIPS MOIST! HE PICKS UP THE PAN OF RED LIQUID FROM THE FLOOR...



THEN... AS YOU WATCH IN TERROR... HE OPENS THE FREEZER AND POURS THE CONTENTS OF THE PAN INTO THE BARREL...



THEN HE BEGINS TO SHUT THE LID. HE STOPS! HE OPENS IT AGAIN! HIS CRUEL LIPS SPREAD IN AN EVIL GRIN! HE REACHES FOR A TIN CUP HANGING ON THE WALL...



HE STOOPS OVER, REACHING INTO THE BARREL! YOU HEAR THE SPLASHING OF THE SICKLY RED-BROWN LIQUID AS HE DIPS INTO IT...



HE... HE'S GOING TO...

YOU WATCH HIM BRING THE CUP TO HIS LIPS AND DRINK IT DOWN! A SMALL STREAM TRICKLES DOWN HIS CHIN... YOU SCREAM...



YAAAAAAH!

IT IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU! YOU DASH TOWARD THE STAIRS SHRIEKING! YOUR HEAD SPINS...THE STAIRS SEEM TO MELT BEFORE YOU! YOU SPRAWL, HALF-WAY UP!

YOU...YOU'VE BEEN SPYING ON ME!



IN A FLASH HE IS UPON YOU...HIS STRONG HANDS HOLDING YOU! YOU'RE WEAK WITH FEAR AND NAUSEA! YOU CANNOT FIGHT HIM...

I HADN'T PLANNED ON ANOTHER VICTIM TONIGHT!



HE CARRIES YOU TO THE TABLE! HE TIES YOU DOWN! YOU SCREAM...

IT IS USELESS TO CRY OUT! WE ARE QUITE ALONE IN THE INN! HE WAS THE ONLY OTHER GUEST...



YOU WATCH, WIDE-EYED, AS HE BRINGS THE PAN AND PLACES IT UNDER THE TABLE...UNDER YOUR HANGING ARM...

YOU...YOU'RE INHUMAN...A MAD FIEND!

PERHAPS!



THE KNIFE BLADE GLITTERS IN THE LANTERN LIGHT! HE COMES TOWARD YOU...BRANDISHING IT...

HAVE PITY...SOB... PITY...

I NEED YOUR BLOOD! I MUST SAVE IT...



THE KNIFE BURNS AS THE GOLD BLADE SLICES INTO YOUR WRIST! YOUR HEAD SWIMS! YOU CAN HEAR HIM TALKING...AND THE STEADY DRIP...DRIP...

SOMETIMES I HAVE NO GUESTS FOR WEEKS! BUT I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY! I HAVE MY SUPPLY...THERE...READY WHEN I NEED IT...



YOUR HEAD POUNDS NOW! THE ROOM WEAVES BEFORE YOU! YOU FEEL YOURSELF SLIPPING...SLIPPING INTO THE BLACKNESS OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS...WEAK...DIZZY...THE DRIP...DRIP...DRIP...



SUDDENLY YOU OPEN YOUR EYES! YOU SQUINT!
THE FIRE IS LOW NOW...BUT GLOWING WARM!
YOU ARE IN THE CHAIR BEFORE IT...



OH, GOD! IT WAS ONLY
A DREAM! A HORRIBLE
NIGHTMARE!

YOU BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF! YOU'D BEEN DREAMING THE
WHOLE THING! YOU LOOK UP! THE INNKEEPER IS SMILING
DOWN AT YOU...



I DIDN'T HAVE THE
HEART TO DISTURB
YOU!

YOU *SHOULD* HAVE! I HAD
THE MOST HIDEOUS NIGHT-
MARE! 1... 1...

SUDDENLY YOU HEAR IT! THE STEADY
DRIPPING! YOU START TO RISE! YOU
CANNOT MOVE! YOU'RE TIED TO THE
CHAIR! AND BENEATH YOUR SLASHED
WRIST IS A PAN...HALF-FILLED WITH
BLOOD...



IT'S TRUE! MY
DREAM... YOU ARE A VAMPIRE!

THE INNKEEPER'S SMILE VANISHES
AS HE SCOWLS AT YOU! THERE IS
DISGUST ON HIS FACE...



HOW DARE YOU
CALL ME A
VAMPIRE!

YOU'RE DRAINING MY BLOOD!
YOU'RE GOING TO PUT IT IN THE
BARREL... DOWNSTAIRS... IN THE
FREEZE-CHEST! YOU ARE
A VAMPIRE...



YOU'RE *WRONG*, MY FRIEND! I AM
NO VAMPIRE! I HATE BLOOD! I
CAN'T STAND MEAT THAT TASTES
OF BLOOD! I AM A GHOUL! I
LIVE ON BLOODLESS...FLESH!
I HAVE A FREEZE-LOCKER
DOWNSTAIRS...BUT IT'S
WELL STOCKED WITH DEAD
HUMAN FLESH!



A GHOUL! THE DREAM... REALITY...THE SAME...YET
DIFFERENT! THE BLACKNESS IS CLOSING IN ON YOU
NOW! THE DRIPPING IS SLOWING UP! PERHAPS
THIS TOO IS BUT A DREAM! PERHAPS YOU WILL
WAKE UP FROM *THIS* NIGHTMARE, ALSO! THE
LAST THING YOU SEE...BEFORE EVERYTHING FADES
...IS THE INNKEEPER...AND HIS MEAT OLEAVER...



THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! AN INCREASE IN THE POPULATION OF A GREAT CITY'S TEEMING MILLIONS IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE STATISTICIAN... BUT TO THE SANITATION DEPT. IT MEANS ONLY THAT MUCH MORE GARBAGE TO COLLECT...



THE CITY HAS A HUGE, EFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR THE REMOVAL OF TRASH, AND ONE OF ITS MOST RESPECTED ASSETS IS ITS FLEET OF STREAMLINED TRUCKS!



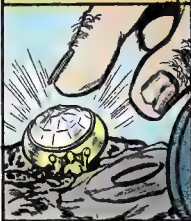
THESE PROUD VEHICLES COVER EVERY PART OF THE METROPOLIS, AND THERE ARE BUT FEW ITEMS THAT CANNOT BE CRUSHED, BROKEN AND HACKED TO BITS BY THEIR GLEAMING, WHIRLING BLADES...



HAVING EATEN THEIR FILL OF GARBAGE, THEY AT ONCE TRAVEL TO THE CITY DUMP AND PURR CONTENTEDLY WHILE THEY DISCHARGE THEIR CARGO.



HERE IS WHERE EVERY BIT OF THE CITY'S COLLECTED WASTE IS BROUGHT. AND IT IS HERE, IN THIS SCAVENGERS' PARADISE, THAT ONE MAY FIND...



...ALMOST ANYTHING!



HEH, HEH! QUITE A *SHOCKING* THING TO FIND, ISN'T IT? NATURALLY, THE MAN ALMOST *FAINTED* UPON VIEWING HIS HORRID DISCOVERY! BUT HE RACED MADLY TO INFORM THE POLICE... *AFTER* HE HAD REMOVED THE RING AND STUFFED IT INTO HIS POCKET, OF COURSE! HOW, YOU MAY ASK, DID THE HAND HAPPEN TO BE LYING IN THE CITY DUMP? HEH! HEH! WELL, THERIN LIES OUR STORY! IT'S A *GRIPPING* TALE AND I CALL IT...

SEEDS of DEATH!



LET'S GO BACK IN TIME TO WHERE OUR STORY *REALLY* BEGAN... TO A SMALL FARM ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE LARGE CITY.



ON THIS PARTICULAR FARM LIVED THE OWNER, BASIL WOODS... HIS WIFE CONNIE...



...AND A HIRED HAND NAMED CLIFF!

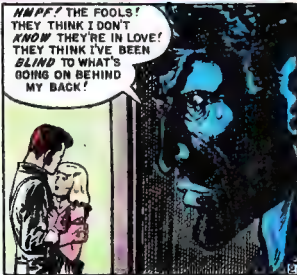


OH, CLIFF... CLIFF! HE'S SO *GRUEL*!

CONNIE, DARLING, IF HE HITS YOU AGAIN... SO HELP ME, I THINK I'LL *KILL* HIM!



HMFF! THE FOOLS! THEY THINK I DON'T *KNOW* THEY'RE IN LOVE! THEY THINK I'VE BEEN *BLIND* TO WHAT'S GOING ON BEHIND MY BACK!



NO MAN CAN TAKE MY WIFE FROM ME AND LIVE! I'LL FIX THE DIRTY HOME-WRECKER WHEN THE TIME COMES!



HEH, HEH! WELL, THAT'S THE SITUATION, DEAR READERS... THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE! TIME PASSED... AND BASIL WAITED PATIENTLY, UNTIL ONE DAY...

SURE, MRS. WOODS!

CLIFF, WHILE YOU'RE IN TOWN TODAY, WOULD YOU BUY ME SOME GARDENIA SEEDS? I WANT TO PLANT THEM IN THE GARDEN!



HE'LL BE IN THE CITY ALL DAY... WON'T BE BACK TILL LATE TONIGHT! AND HE'LL PROBABLY TAKE THE SHORT-CUT 'ROSS THE FIELD TO THE HOUSE...
HMM-M...



... AND SO, LATE THAT NIGHT...

EVENING, CLIFF! DID YOU GET MY WIFE'S GARDENIA SEEDS?

EH? OH... HI, MR. WOODS! YES, I HAVE THEM RIGHT HERE!



HERE THEY ARE! WANT TO TAKE A LOOK?



¡GASP! THERE... IT'S DONE! NOW TO BURY HIM... ¡GASP!... RIGHT HERE! HEE, HEE! IN TIME TO COME, HIS BODY'LL MAKE FINE FERTILIZER FOR THIS FIELD! ¡GASP!





HEH, HEH! YES, THE DEED WAS DONE! NOW BASIL WOODS FELT CERTAIN HIS WIFE WOULD SOON FORGET HER SILLY LOVE AFFAIR. THE NEXT MORNING...



I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! CLIFF HASN'T RETURNED FROM THE CITY YET! I HOPE HE'S ALL RIGHT!

CLIFF HASN'T RETURNED? TCH, TCH!

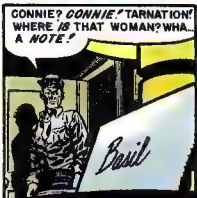


HA, HA! SHE'S WORRIED! BUT AS THE DAYS PASS, SHE'LL FORGET HIM... SHE'LL FORGET!

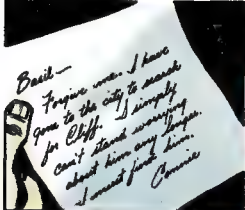


WELL, THE DAYS DID PASS BUT CONNIE DIDN'T FORGET! AND ONE EVENING AS BASIL RETURNED FROM THE FIELDS...

CONNIE? CONNIE? TARNATION! WHERE IS THAT WOMAN? WHA... A NOTE!



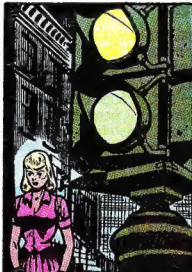
THAT BLASTED NO-GOOD! I'LL TEACH HER TO RUN OFF LIKE THIS! I'LL GO TO THE CITY AND DRAG HER BACK BY THE HAIR OF HER HEAD!



Basil -
Forgive me. I have gone to the city to search for Cliff. I simply can't stand worrying about him any longer. I must find him. Connie

GOODBYE, MY CHILD. I'M SORRY I COULDN'T BE OF ANY HELP, BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN MY SON FOR QUITE SOME TIME!

THANK YOU. GOODBYE...



BASIL!

YAS, IT'S ME! DIDJA THINK IT WAS GONNA BE YOUR PRECIOUS GLIFF?



BASIL, PLEASE! DON'T HIT ME!

HIT YOU! WHY, I'LL BEAT YOUR STUPID HEAD IN! I'LL TEACH YOU TO RUN OFF!



DON'T TOUCH ME!

YOU AND YOUR PRECIOUS GLIFF! WELL, YOU'LL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN!

YOU STAY AWAY FROM ME! DON'T TOUCH ME!







G'MON, JOE!
LEND A
HAND! THIS
CAN IS
HEAVY!



OKAY! OKAY!
BUT SHE SURE
IS GLASSY!

NUTS! TO
ME, THEY
ALL LOOK
ALIKE!



...TROUBLE IS, YOU GOT
NO APPRECIATION!

YEAH, SURE...

KA-CHOMP!
KA-CHOMP!
KA-CHOMP!
KA-CHOMP!

HEH! NATURALLY, CONNIE WAS UNAWARE OF HER HUSBAND'S FATE, AND FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, SHE SEARCHED THE CITY IN VAIN... FOR CLIFF...



(SOB) IT'S NO USE... I'LL
NEVER FIND HIM! HE...
HE JUST DISAPPEARED!
(SOB)

HOTEL
RATES

FINALLY, SHE RETURNED TO THE FARM. SAD AND WEARY, SHE TROD THE SHORT-CUT ACROSS THE FIELD TOWARD THE HOUSE. SUDDENLY, SHE STOPPED... HER EYES WIDENED!



SHE STOOD TRANSFIXED IN HORROR! BEFORE HER, NOT TEN FEET FROM WHERE SHE STOOD, WAS A MOUND OF GARDENIAS! ALL AT ONCE, THERE CAME THE SHOCKING REALIZATION THAT AT LAST SHE HAD FOUND... HER PRECIOUS CLIFF.



THE
END

HEH, HEH, HEH! I THOUGHT THAT CLIMAX WAS A BIT FLOWERY, DIDN'T YOU? BUT THE REST OF THE STORY CERTAINLY HAD SOME GRINDING, TEARING MOMENTS! AND CLIFF... HE REALLY GOT A SHORT-CUT WHEN HE TOOK THE SHORT-CUT! BUT DON'T FEEL TOO SAD ABOUT HIM!



HEH! NOT EVERY MURDER VICTIM CARRIES HIS OWN BOUQUET OF FLOWERS TO HIS GRAVE! WELL, THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT! I DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE LAUGHING WHILE READING A HORROR STORY! HEH! HEH! HEH!



The Old Witch